

*Remarks of Shannon Baldino
Language Arts
Cromwell*

**Before the Education Committee
On S.B. 24, AN ACT CONCERNING EDUCATIONAL COMPETITIVENESS**

February 21, 2012

Good afternoon Senator Stillman, Representative Fleischmann, and members of the Education Committee.

My name is Shannon Baldino, and I'm a first-year teacher of Language Arts in Cromwell. I am here today to comment on Senate Bill 24, Sections 28 and 30. I would like to share with you a quote by the author, Helen Caldicott: "Teachers, I believe, are the most responsible and important members of society because their professional efforts affect the fate of the earth." Teachers are crucial to the growth of our country, the advancement of our future, and the binding of our democracy. This is why I became a teacher.

I began this year ignorant to the strenuous work that teachers deal with every day. I thought that teaching meant preparing lessons that were differentiated and engaging. I thought that teaching meant showing up at seven and leaving at 2:45, having inspired my pupils to live the best lives that they could. I thought that teaching would be easy. I cannot begin to explain to you how grossly wrong my assumptions had been.

I soon realized that I wasn't only a teacher, but, for lack of better words, a "Jack of all trades." At times, I am a nurse and supply the proper amount of Band-Aids for one paper cut. I am a counselor who dries the tears of the broken hearted eighth-grader whose love has ended. I am a reporter who identifies and protects those whose families are not being the families they need. I am a data-keeper who keeps track of student improvement for each and every student. I am a liaison between parents and my classroom, keeping the parents up to date with their students' fantastic progress, and sometime not so fantastic progress. Did I mention that along with all this, I also teach?

Please, I hope I have not sent the wrong message. I want you to know that I absolutely love my job. The gratification of watching a student smiling to himself because he got every answer right on a test—a student who was previously failing—is worth more than any amount of money. And as all teachers would probably agree—we didn't get into this profession because the pay is outstanding. If I may be frank, I am currently working almost twelve-hour days and I barely can pay my student loans. And yes, you did hear me right—I said twelve hour days. People seem to forget the two, three, sometimes even four hours that teachers stay after school providing extra help and preparing lessons and materials for the next day. People seem to forget the enormous

amount of grading teachers bring home with them in the evening—a time that should be spent with our loved ones. It is amazing how quick people can be to judge our professions without stepping in our shoes.

On that note, I would love to invite Governor Malloy, or anyone else who questions the amount of work we do and how we would be affected by this proposed bill, to come spend an entire day in my shoes, not just my school day, and live the endless amount of work and stress I deal with on a daily basis. But on second thought, I would never trust a non-certified individual to teach my students. In the future, when I have children of my own, I would never trust a non-certified teacher to instruct my children.

I urge you to please listen to CEA and follow teachers' proposed reform. If Governor Malloy's bill passes, I will have to question whether the pressures it imposes and the blow it will have on my life are worth it, and I may be forced to look for a different occupation. In the few months that I have been a teacher, I have realized quickly that teaching is not a profession—it is a lifestyle. Please do not ruin this for me, and ultimately, your children and the children of this great state. Thank you.